

The Brooks County Board of Commissioners met for a Special Called Meeting/Work Session and Executive Session on Tuesday, July 25, 2023, at 5:15 p.m., at the Brooks County Administrative Building, in the Commissioners Meeting Room, located at 610 South Highland Road, Quitman, GA. Commissioners present were: Mr. Patrick Folsom, Chairman, Mr. James Maxwell, Vice Chairman, Mrs. Myra Exum; Mr. Willie Cody, and Mr. Lee Larko. Others present were Ms. Jessica McKinney, County Administrator; Ms. Patricia Williams; County Clerk; Ms. Kim Daniels, Human Resources; and Mr. James Burchett County Attorney, and various residents.

### **SPECIAL CALLED MEETING**

**1. CALL TO ORDER** – Chairman called the meeting to order.

**A. PRAYER/PLEDGE** – Mr. Maxwell led all in attendance in prayer and pledge of allegiance.

On a motion by Mrs. Exum, the agenda was amended to add Road Department Update as Item E, Mr. Larko seconded. Vote was unanimous.

**B. Increase Base Pay for Commissioners** – This item was requested for discussion by Mr. Maxwell. Mr. Maxwell stated the current base pay for Commissioners is \$600 and would like to see an increase to \$800 if the budget allows it. He further stated it has been years, approximately 20 years since they had an increase. Mrs. Exum commented that the Governor gave Constitutional Officers an increase of \$5,000 in January 2023, and will get a \$2,000 increase January 2024. Mr. Maxwell stated that if that is the case, that is good. He was under the impression that the increase would not last; but now has clarification.

**C. Fire Department Update** – Chief Weeks appeared to provide an update on the Fire Department:

- So far, this month responded to 58 calls for service, 17 trees across the road, 2 power lines down, 8 MVAs, 1 extrication, 9 medical calls, 11 canceled or no incident found, one structure fire, one vehicle fire, 4 fire alarms, 1 stove fire, and one carbon monoxide leak.
- LCFR was called for mutual aid, needed their 4 gas meters.
- The structure fire was located at 5300 Barwick Road, had 13 Firefighters responded.
- Hired two part-time training instructors that work for GPSTC as adjunct instructors.
- Informed the Board that City of Morven has withdrawn from the Brooks County Fire Coalition, the withdrawal date is the first part of August 2023.
- Morven expressed the desire to have an automatic aid agreement between the two departments. Chief Weeks expressed his concerns regarding them being able to hold up their end of the automatic aid agreement. Chief advised them if they have an aid agreement and they do not provide personnel on scene

with firefighting equipment and state certification, there will have to be a fee for service.

- We can benefit from the fact that Morven has a hydrant system; we can use their water if we have a fire in the area; which will benefit both Brooks and Morven on ISO.
- Morven intends to run water mains and hydrants down both sides of Hwy 133 from the city limits to BCT Gin Road and annex the ROW. They also intend to run water mains and hydrants down Hwy 76 from the city limits to a point between Ponder Road and Rolling Hills Road and annex the ROW.
- After meeting with Chief Yates and Mayor Hill, Chief Weeks is concerned about the revelation of their intent to annex property.

**D. Development Authority** – Brooks County Development Authority Chairman, Mr. Darren Yearby, appeared to address some issues regarding their budget, and figure out if there is an issue. He stated their budget was higher due to renovations to the building at the cost of \$60,000, not \$84,000. Mr. Yearby stated the building belongs to Brooks County, so any renovations done stays with Brooks County. Administrator pointed out there was a reduction in their budget of \$84,000 of which was \$60,000 for Administration spend and there is no issue.

Mr. Yearby stated he would like to continue moving forward with the Board and people on the Board and will continue doing better forward.

**E. Road Department Update** – Amy Hart, Road Department, provided an update. Mrs. Hart stated the Road Department is drowning, currently there is only have 10 or less employees. She rides roads and they all look the same. Receiving lot of calls from citizens regarding roads but do not have enough employees, it takes more manpower. There is not a person to do everything that needs to be done, the biggest problem is having certain employees to do certain things; do not have time to ditch roads in the capacity they are in. Mrs. Hart further stated that the employees are following the schedule set each week, there is no accountability.

Mr. Maxwell suggested to bring county retirees in to assist. Mr. Cody inquired if there are people in the county that can assist or put out a request or contract out. Mr. Larko inquired how long will it take to get bids in? The recommendation was made to authorize Administrator to reach out to neighboring counties to hire three skilled operators to work temporary up to a certain amount of dollars. The question was asked how will you select? The response was to put ad in the paper and accept the lower bid, run the ad for one week, if no bid is received, reach out and ask companies. Another recommendation was to hire for temporary work, with no equipment, for 20 working days at approximately \$30,000. The funds will come from the Road Department budget. After discussion, Mr. Larko made a motion to authorize the Administrator to hire on temporary basis for four weeks at \$30,000, no equipment will use

county equipment; and funds come from the current Road Department budget, Mr. Maxwell seconded. Vote was unanimous.

Chairman closed the special called meeting at 6:38 pm.

## **2. WORK SESSION**

**A. Regular Meeting Agenda Review – August 7, 2023** – The Board reviewed/discussed the agenda for the upcoming meeting.

**5. Reports from Committees & Departments (5 Minutes)** – Items added:

**B. Brooks County Road Department**

**C. Elections Department**

**7. Old Business – Deleted Items**

**A. Board Appointment – Planning Commission** – Tabled, all Board appointments will be advertised for two weeks, posted on website and Facebook.

**B. Home Offset Exemption** – Board discussed how it can help the county, will discuss further. Copies of how it is handled by other counties were provided. Referendum will have to go on the elections ballot in November.

**C. Senior Income Based Exemption** – Chief Tax Appraiser, Mr. Waldron, will provide the Board with a copy of the schedule of exemptions, and run the numbers to see the impact to revenue and if effects daily operations.

**D. Pavo Fire Station** – Administrator reported the Mayor of Pavo wants the Fire Station back. The asked Administrator to speak with the Mayor and see what his intentions are.

## **8. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. GDOT – Speed Zone Ordinances – Updating Existing Speed Limits** – This item was tabled and moved to the September meeting. County Attorney will contact GDOT to find out if we can change the speed limits or not. Sheriff Dewey will look at roads and speed signs.

**C. Employee Compensation for Not Having County Health Insurance** – Item deleted.

## **9. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**A. P. D. Duncan – 4th of July – Being held on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July** – Administrator will speak and explain to Mr. Duncan, this item maybe deleted from agenda.

Board received documentation from Tax Commissioner regarding dates to set millage rates. Mrs. Rothrock is encouraging the Board to set meeting for proposed millage rate and fee rates no later than Wednesday, August 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Administrator McKinney reported to the Board that she received the Digest Numbers from Tax Commissioner Rothrock after hours on Monday July 24<sup>th</sup>, the previous day, and  
Special Called/Work Session/Executive Session      July 25, 2023      Page 3 of 4

forwarded them to the Board upon reviewing the email that morning, July 25<sup>th</sup> as it was recognized that the Board did not want to make any decisions regarding the budget until review of the Digest and the Rollback rate. There was additional discussion on how the budget was being presented. Administrator McKinney reminded the Board that the initial budget recommendation was presented in the meeting on June 26<sup>th</sup> in the same format as previous years budget. At that time the Board's interest was the Millage/Rollback as there was concern in raising taxes to support the budget, therefore, as a result, the Board agreed to not take action until the Digest Numbers became available.

A new request was made by Commissioner Exum to see the budget in line-item format before proceeding. Administrator McKinney explained that this would produce a very extensive report. Line items have historically not been entered prior to budget adoption rather Departments are approved overall funding amounts and then looked at to disseminate accordingly in their respective departments. Administrator McKinney offered an example; after input of uncontrollable such as salary, social security, and benefits, the remaining balance of the approved budget for that department is then assigned, as requested amounts could be different than approved and would prevent multiple entries. This is how the budget has been worked and presented without any previous request for adjusting this process. Administrator McKinney did commit to changing this process and entering it to present again to the Board, however, that entry would take additional time, particularly since we are working and learning in a new financial system. The Administrator said she would need through the following Wednesday, August 2<sup>nd</sup> to complete, leaving room to attend to all other foreseen and unforeseen business. The Board agreed that this is how they would like to proceed.

The Board discussed the request from the City for a joint meeting on July 31<sup>st</sup>. They would like to meet at 9:00 am, Board agreed they can meet at 3:00 pm. The meeting will be held at the Ag Building Venue.

On a motion by Mr. Cody, seconded by Mr. Maxwell, the Board adjourned special called to go in executive session at 8:09 pm. The Board went out of executive session at 8:31 pm, on the motion by Mr. Maxwell and Mr. Larko seconded.

### **3. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**A. Litigation** – No action was taken.

### **4. ADJOURNMENT**

The Board adjourned at 8:32 pm, on the motion by Mrs. Exum, seconded by Mr. Larko.

Mr. Patrick Folsom, Chairman

Ms. Jessica McKinney, County Administrator

Ms. Patricia A. Williams, County Clerk